

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

September 12, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

I write today to call your attention to and seek assistance with a crucial and time sensitive issue related to the implementation of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

As you know, the Farm Bill included provisions establishing a disaster assistance program that could be extremely beneficial in helping our farmers and ranchers continue operations through tough times. Within those provisions is a requirement to purchase insurance. However, since the insurance sales closing dates for many crops already in the ground had passed prior to the enactment of the Farm Bill, Congress established a one-time exception for producers to buy into the disaster program by Sept. 16, 2008.

Although that exception in law applies to 2008 crops, I am seeking your utilization of related authorities in the Farm Bill to extend a similar exception to other crops for which the insurance sales closing dates had passed prior to the enactment of the Farm Bill. An example is the 2009 citrus crop. The production cycle for this crop was well underway when the Farm Bill was signed into law and the crop insurance sales closing date passed in late 2007.

Many producers of these commodities have been able to manage risks of losses through crop insurance, while others likely would have made different decisions on their 2009 crop had they known of this program earlier.

Although the current program buy-in process, which ends next week, is specifically for 2008 crops, this request is to establish a similar option for 2009 crops in this same specific situation and to do it soon so those producers can put their uncertainty at rest. Your assistance in respecting their difficult situation is appreciated.

I understand USDA is working diligently to implement this complex Farm Bill and I appreciate your attention to this matter. Thank you in advance for your timely response.

Yours truly,



Todd Staples

TS/DD/lp

